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Parental Attachment Styles and Traditional Undergraduates' Adjustment to College: Testing the "Helicopter Parent" Phenomenon

Abstract

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to investigate college student perceptions of attachment styles to parents and peers and the influence these attachment styles have on adaptation to college and academic achievement. In addition, other non-cognitive factors of college student adjustment were investigated. Student participants completed the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Unrelated parent participants participated in a focus group to answer questions about their experience of their students' transition to college and their relationship with their college student. Quantitative results indicated no direct relationship between GPA and attachment, though attachment to the father/male guardian was found to account for 43% of the variability in student adjustment when GPA is held constant. Several themes emerged from the qualitative data including, maintained closeness, rough transition to college, replete communication, changed relationship as the student matures, and parental involvement at healthy levels. Overall findings indicated parental over-involvement, or being a "helicopter parent" was not found to correlate with college adjustment or high GPA while a moderate level of parental involvement, especially on the part of the father/male guardian is very helpful for college students.

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PARENTAL ATTACHMENT STYLES AND TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATES'

ADJUSTMENT TO COLLEGE:

TESTING THE "HELICOPTER PARENT" PHENOMENON

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF

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PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

HILLSBORO, OREGON

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OF

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ABSTRACT

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to investigate college student perceptions of attachment styles to parents and peers and the influence these attachment styles have on adaptation to college and academic achievement. In addition, other non-cognitive factors of college student adjustment were investigated. Student participants completed the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Unrelated parent participants participated in a focus group to answer questions about their experience of their students' transition to college and their relationship with their college student. Quantitative results indicated no direct relationship between GPA and attachment, though attachment to the father/male guardian was found to account for 43% of the variability in student adjustment when GPA is held constant. Several themes emerged from the qualitative data including, maintained closeness, rough transition to college, replete communication, changed relationship as the student matures, and parental involvement at healthy levels. Overall findings indicated parental over-involvement, or being a "helicopter parent" was not found to correlate with college adjustment or high GPA while a moderate level of parental involvement, especially on the part of the father/male guardian is very helpful for college students.

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INTRODUCTION

Attachment and Academic Adjustment in College

Increasing attention is being paid to the role of early attachment experiences on students' experiences of the transition to college. Previous research has indicated that different parenting styles are associated with different outcomes for children later in life (Odubote, 2008; Shilkret & Vecchiotti, 1997). In particular, children whose parents engaged in "indulgent" parenting styles were associated with lower academic adjustment in college than were children whose parents engaged in authoritarian parenting styles, though they were found to be just as well adjusted in other areas measured: socially and personally/emotionally (Shilkret & Vecchiotti, 1997). It should be noted that Shilkret and Vecchiotti (1997) likened "indulgent" parenting styles to Baumrind's (1971) "permissive" parenting style in which parents were defined as "non-controlling, non-demanding, and relatively warm" (p. 2).

Further, the concept of "adjustment" to college has also been influenced by more of a focus on "non-cognitive" variables than on cognitive abilities. It is a common belief among many faculty members that noncognitive variables are significant contributors in terms of school success (Kyllonen, 2005). This is supported by evidence that noncognitive factors are good predictors of grades/academic success before college (Caprara, Barbanelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000). Across all educational levels, including college, some of the noncognitive factors most commonly and/or

frequently valued include persistence, tenacity, collegiality, communication skills, and enthusiasm (Kyllonen, 2005).

Non-cognitive factors are garnering more attention from colleges and educational researchers because of their effects on academic persistence and retention. Previous studies have indicated that the majority of students who withdraw from college are not in academic distress (Tinto, 1993) but are having psychosocial adjustment problems. Specific problems which may be experienced by students include symptoms of depression and potentially harmful reactions to stress (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

In their investigation of first year college student adjustment, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) noted that students whose parents had an authoritative parenting style adapted more successfully to college than other students. Wintre and Yaffe (2000) also suggested that institutions ensure that students are aware of the mental health services offered, and also recommended that parents maintain involvement in their children's lives because the transition to college can be a confounding experience and reciprocity (open communication) with parents can be helpful. However, some of this advice from educational theorists may have consequences for student adjustment when considered in tandem with the burgeoning research on parental attachment effects on adolescent and young adult behaviors.

Concomitantly, parenting style has become a recent addition to the "non-cognitive" domains referred to above that may predict retention (Ross & Hammer, 2002). Academic performance and non-cognitive factors in adjustment are the two themes of this study. These are explored in more detail below.

Styles of attachment to parents and peers as co-occurring predictors of college adaptation (academic and psychosocial) have become more important in the understanding of the experiences of traditional college freshmen (Hickman, Bartholomae, & McHenry, 2000). Socio-cultural changes in the parenting experiences of the recent cohort of traditional aged college freshman have been reviewed elsewhere (Twenge, 2006) with special attention to the increasingly dependent role young adults seem to have on their parents, and those parents' perceptions that they must be involved in their children's lives well beyond the time when they reach adulthood. Of related interest may be the World Health Organization's definition of an adolescent as a person who is between 10-19 years of age and the definition of a "youth" as a person who is between 15-24 years of age (2008). Given this, as well as the average age of a traditional college student being 18-22 years, combined with the rising cost of higher education, and the notion of the current generation of college students as special, sheltered, and pressured, among other qualities (Howe & Strauss, 2003), therein exists a recipe for financial, emotional, and psychosocial dependency on parents.

Further, throughout history several notable parents have continued significant involvement in their children's lives. For example, Queen Victoria slept in the same room as her daughter until she was age 18. Another example includes Franklin Delano Roosevelt's mother who moved to be close to him while he attended college (Robb, 2008).

What these examples inform us is that parental over-involvement is not necessarily a new concept; nor is it culturally bound or dependent. What is new in today's society is the lack of adult roles and behaviors being assumed by those people who might

once have been defined as a “young adult” but are now defined as “adolescent” and/or “youth.” It is apparent that many in this under age 24 bracket either lack the basic skills and abilities to take care of themselves or simply expect their parents to continue to do it for them as has been the case so far.

Frankly, it is not clear that all of the responsibility for this situation can be put on the young people in this case. Howe and Strauss (2003) point out that they have been raised this way and in fact, always treated as exceptional and significant; and always wanted by their parents. Their parents have also constantly gone to great lengths to protect them; utilizing car seats, baby on board signs, school lockdowns, and maybe even getting their finger prints at the school carnival or similar functions. These parents have also created, and earned the image of the suburban, mini-van driving, soccer-mom; someone who represents so many parents who made every attempt to schedule every hour of their child’s day to the point that they struggle with how to handle free time, and in turn, time management because they have never had to do it themselves. With this, comes pressure to succeed, the push to achieve, to avoid risk, and the need to take advantage of opportunities at every possible opening.

These children, who are now growing up (at least chronologically), often take on more than they can handle with expectation that others, such as their college faculty, should be flexible when conflicts arrive. If this is not the case, it may be an opportunity for what has been termed the “dump phone call” (Kastner & Wyatt, 2002); a seemingly disastrous cry for help when a student calls home from college in a cathartic emotional release of negativity and tears. Dump phone calls are commonplace in today’s college life, but may be a sign that a student lacks coping skills and are also cause for concern

among parents who, unfamiliar with the situation and wanting to protect their children as best they can, often react by contacting college administrators about the list of problems discussed during the call. This involvement and likely follow-through by the college can only serve to further the entitlement that today's young people already display (Twenge, 2006). This entitlement permeates throughout their selves, especially in college and is quite evident, especially when it comes to grades. For example, college students often make statements such as "I need a better grade," "I deserve an A on this paper," and "I never get B's" (Twenge, 2006, p. 70). They are not using language that includes terms like "work" and "earn."

What could result, and in some extreme cases has, are horrifying outcomes. As Twenge (2006) points out, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the teenage gunmen at Columbine High School, exhibited signs of zealous entitlement and narcissism. On videos made before the shootings, the two made statements about getting the respect they deserved, and making others believe things that are not true, among other examples. The point is that everything was about fulfilling their needs, and they were not able to cope in appropriate ways when things did not turn out in their favor (Twenge, 2006). In other words, they lacked resiliency. Parenting styles now tend to focus on protecting children from consequences or negative emotions; therefore, children tend not to learn resiliency.

Helicopter Parents

In today's world, the phenomenon of "helicopter parents" is one that is becoming ever more common in the United States. These members of "the baby boomer generation who hover" over their children (Coburn, 2006, p. 9) are a frequent topic among college administrators (J. Murray-Jensen, personal communication, August 10, 2008), and are

often cited in popular media. In fact, in one such article from the magazine *O*, Robb (2008) details parental over-involvement in the lives of college students, cites examples of the lengths parents are willing to go to for their children, and makes mention of trends that may contribute to this parental over-involvement. In another article published by the University of Texas at Austin, Randall (2007) informs readers that parents are decidedly more involved than the actual applicants in the college admissions process, and references a survey by The College Board and the Art & Science Group which found that “about 95 percent of them [the 1,700 undergraduates surveyed] said their parents are ‘involved’ or ‘very involved’ in college planning activities” (p. 4). In another article from The Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition, Noris (2005, p. 2) offers suggestions to help students ease the transition to college and sheds light on the possibility that “while helicopter parents mean well, they might not realize that they are actually undermining the student’s chance of success, both during and after college.” What helicopter parents are doing is not just being “involved,” they are being “directive” and “invasive” and taking away the chance for decision-making and consequences of the same from the child.

The above are just a few examples of media references to the phenomenon of helicopter parents. Despite the popularity of the subject in the media, there has been little empirical research conducted on the topic of helicopter parents, what role they play in the lives of their children, and what effect they may have on their children as they enter and navigate their college years. The authors of the research and publications that do exist offer varied and sometimes conflicting information.

For example, the 2007 results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (also known as the “Nessie”) indicate that helicopter parents may actually help students thrive (Lipka, 2007). Although college administrators and related personnel who work with parents often view this group as “overprotective” and challenging to serve, it is likely that students often benefit from parental involvement (Carney-Hall, 2008). Baby boomer parents are consumers, and as such, view college as a commodity that they are buying — a product that they want to ensure is top notch and one they are willing to go to great lengths to make certain is just that. In the process, they all too often become the aforementioned *helicopter* parents (if they are not there already), capitalizing on how they have raised their “Millennial Generation” (Howe & Strauss, 2003) children thus far and increasing their level of involvement to excessive degrees. For example, when it comes to school, some educators describe them as contacting teachers daily, arguing about problems that are marked wrong, and claiming their child is “perfect” (Rothman, 2008). Though it is true that not all parents labeled with the moniker “helicopter parent” would fit this description, there are those who do, and many others who would fit to varying degrees. It is important to recognize that parents may take these types of actions, for cultural, familial, and financial reasons that are completely rational.

Carney-Hall (2008) notes that while “families are emotionally invested in the college choice process, they are also significantly invested financially” (p. 4). Indeed, students often have to take out more loans necessitating their parents’ co-signatures and financial obligation. This makes them “co-investors” in their children’s education and motivated to protect that investment. Thus, the helicopter parent phenomenon that began with over-scheduling as a child often takes a poignant turn towards liftoff as the college

search begins and a new trend emerges in which many parents grapple with just how much to be involved in their child's college search and admissions process. While it is likely that most parents maintain some boundaries during this time, there are others such as Suzanne Ducharme, who found that the only "sensible thing" to do to help her daughter through the college admissions process was to quit her job "to be [t]here full time" through the process (Shellenbarger, 2008, p. 1). Ms. Ducharme is not the only one. Deirdre Wyeth quit a part-time volunteer post to help her high-school *junior* through the process. She wanted to "take away as much of the pressure" as she could (Shellenbarger, 2008, p. 1). The actions of these two parents (and likely many similar others) demonstrate their investment in as well as the level of attachment they have towards their children.

At a time when public and other financial support for education is becoming more difficult to obtain, parents and families are confronted with increased tuition and related fees for their students. In fact, according to the College Board (n.d.), the average cost of tuition at US private, four-year, colleges and universities was 5.9% higher for the 2008-2009 academic year than in 2007-2008, totaling about \$25,143. For similar public institutions the increase was 6.4%, totaling about \$6,585. The increase at public two-year institutions was 4.7%, totaling \$2,402. The College Board (n.d.) is also quick to point out that "there is more than \$142 billion in financial aid available" and goes on to state that "a college education is still an affordable choice for most families." It is reasonable to assume, given these circumstances, that parents are more involved than ever before, if for no other reason than to protect their investment. The College Board (n.d.) also notes that the difference in earning potential between someone with a high school diploma and

someone with a bachelor's degree is about \$800,000; thus, college really is an investment.

It is also important to note that today's parents truly are protective of their children. In the United States, there is a "prevalence of nanny cams, seatbelt laws, infant car seat regulations, bicycle helmets, and toy recalls" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 5). In addition, students of racial/ethnic minority status, students with a history of mental health issues and students who may have learning disabilities, as well as those whose parents are concerned about school safety in the wake of emergencies like Virginia Tech, Hurricane Katrina, Columbine, Thurston, and Jonesboro all are likely to have "concerned parents" (Carney-Hall, 2008): parents who are likely to hover.

Influential Parenting Styles and Family Structure

As referenced above, children whose parents engaged in indulgent parenting styles, rather parents who attempted to protect their children from negative emotions or failure experiences, generally had a more difficult time adjusting to college than did their peers whose parents were more authoritarian (Shilkret & Vecchiotti, 1997). However, Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry (2000) noted that students whose parents were more authoritarian (and those who were more permissive) than other parents had lower academic grades, poor college adjustment, and lower self-esteem. These contrasting findings provided one impetus for the current study. It should also be noted that Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry stated that "adolescents from *authoritative* home environments demonstrated greater levels of academic competence and adjustment than adolescents reared by authoritarian parents" (2000, p. 3, emphasis added).

This is corroborated by Darling (1999) who reviewed the four most common parenting styles including authoritative and authoritarian, as well as indulgent and uninvolved. These parenting styles have been found to reflect organically transpiring models of parental values, practices, and behaviors (Baumrind, 1991). Specifically, indulgent parents are more responsive than demanding and allow their children to self-regulate. Authoritarian parents are quite demanding and directive; however, they are not very responsive to their children. Unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive. Last, uninvolved parents lack both demand and responsiveness towards their children (Baumrind, 1991). Given these distinctions, it is clear that some parenting styles (e.g., authoritative) lend themselves to more well-adjusted children than other parenting styles (e.g., uninvolved). In fact, as Darling (1999) makes clear, authoritative parenting which provides a clear balance of mandate and emotional sensitivity, as well as acknowledgement of child independence, is an excellent predictor of competence from early childhood through adolescence.

Family structure must also be taken into account. Because nearly half (45.8%) of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, this means that a significant number of children may spend part of their lives in homes where divorce has taken place (Crouch & Arnold, 2009). In fact, Glick (1988) estimated that 40% of all US children will be in this situation. Unfortunately for these children, research has shown “that children who encounter changes in family structure often experience severe consequences such as lower academic attainment and adjustment” (as cited in Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry, 2000, p. 4). Suggestions have also been made that these problems with adjustment continue into the college years as well as young adulthood. Given this,

students who are from families who have not experienced divorce are likely to adjust better to college and achieve better in their academics. In addition, they might be expected to be more securely attached to their parents and able to make the “launch” into college more successfully than other students because they have had a better foundation for security and exploration as well as fewer emotional and behavioral problems than students whose parents were divorced (as cited in Kemp, 2008).

Socioeconomic and Minority Status Factors

The socioeconomic forces that affect poor and many minority students are varied and yet play a significant detrimental role for most students who fall in categories commonly labeled as “poor” (low socioeconomic status) or minority. For example, students in these groups are often labeled as having lower academic aspirations or they are passed over for academic recognition or opportunities like special programs for academically gifted students (Smart, 1993; Ford & Thomas, 1997). Further, the students who fit in these categories typically have parents who did not attend college and therefore do not place a value on the college experience or what it can bring to their children. However, at such time as their students may decide to go ahead and pursue college, these parents will likely see it as an investment for which they demand a return.

As noted above, students who are of minority and/or low socioeconomic status (SES) have a number of obstacles to overcome in their paths to college. These students frequently do not have parents or other adult models in their lives who have attended college which precludes them from providing a model for attending college. In addition, as noted above, there is a financial discrepancy as it is often more difficult for low SES and minority students to pay for college despite the increased availability of financial aid

for students in these groups. The cost of higher education is a very real, very constant concern of students.

While cost and ability to pay is often a focus of these students, a concern of their parents is the *value* of the education. In addition, as education is so often viewed as an investment, an additional concern is when the investment will generate a return. In keeping with the “education as investment” model, as was suggested above, if the education is obtainable, and parents make the outlay all or a portion of the costs, they view themselves as consumers of college (higher education), rather than supporters of their students (Carney-Hall, 2008). As such, parents aim to protect their investment; this is often one reason they become over-involved in their student’s lives at college.

The particular intersection of economic class and attitudes towards educational attainment are of particular import for understanding the role of parent-child attachment on academic outcomes.

Parents who would be classified as “blue-collar” workers are likely to be employed under more strict and rigid working conditions than their “white-collar” counterparts who are likely to be employed in positions that are typically more tolerant and flexible (Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry, 2000). There is also a distinct difference in the earned income level of a blue-collar worker and a white-collar worker; namely about \$800,000 over a lifetime, as noted above. While the particular financials are not the focus here, the point is that parents with less education (i.e. blue-collar workers) have fewer resources to fund their children’s education and may not see the merit of education beyond vocational training (Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry, 2000). In addition, Sewell and Shaw (1968) found that the higher the parents’ educational

level the greater success their students would have in college. Sewell and Shaw (1968) also noted that parents' educational attainment was significantly positively associated with parental encouragement of college plans, attendance, and graduation when aptitude was controlled for. All of this indicates a lower likelihood for college attendance and success for children whose parents did not attend college and/or those who do not see it as a value such as some blue-collar workers.

In addition to the income difference, world view between blue-collar and white-collar workers may be such that blue-collar parents emphasize values such as obedience and respect for authority, reason less with their children, and tend to be authoritarian in their parenting styles (Maccoby, 1980; McLoyd, 1990; Simons, Whitebeck, Melby & Wu, 1994). By contrast, white-collar parents are often found to emphasize fairness, communication, reasoning, curiosity, and be more authoritative with their children, in part because that is what they experience at work (Hickman, Bartholomae & McKenry, 2000).

While it is commonly recognized that parents are the most influential people in their children's lives, as indicated above, this can have both positive and negative effects. In his book, *Limbo: Blue-collar roots, White-collar dreams* (2004), Alfred Lubrano, the son of a bricklayer, notes that his enrollment in Columbia University was not met with parental support. He describes himself and other working class children who moved up the SES ladder as "Straddlers" whose aspirations were a source of tension in their families:

“It’s not unusual for Straddlers to spar with or feel slighted by family because they’ve become educated...A young person is being propelled out of the ghetto, the ethnic enclave, or the map-dot-tiny farming community. It’s time to rejoice. No one mentions the ambivalence—and sometimes antipathy—of relatives on hand to watch the launch” (p. 63, 2004).

This kind of parental influence can be problematic for students from blue-collar backgrounds, and can be exceptionally challenging for students who may also identify as an ethnic minority. Not only are students of lower socioeconomic status less prepared for college enrollment and receive less help should they pursue college (Isaacs, Sawhill, & Haskins, 2008), if they are of an additional minority status, they may have other challenges. Specifically, students of minority status often have additional burdens such as the expectation to work in order to care for or support their family of origin, and the imposed feeling that if they leave for school they will be abandoning the family (Williams-Washington, 2009). In addition, should any student of low-income/socioeconomic status pursue higher education, he or she would be significantly less likely to graduate from college at any time, ever, than students from higher socioeconomic brackets (Ishitani, 2006). Similar data have been reported for ethnic minorities, particularly, Hispanics and African-Americans. For example, members of these two groups are 59% and 58%, respectively, less likely to graduate after four years of college than their Euro-American counterparts (Ishitani, 2006).

Technology and Tethering

Another kind of parental influence is also lurking about in the Blackberries, Apples, and other technological marvels students have today. This kind knows almost no boundaries, can be helpful or hurtful in seconds, drives faculty and college administrators up the wall, and has been described by some as the “world’s longest umbilical cord”

(Shellenbarger, 2005). Once upon a time, it was unusual to have a cell-phone or computer, but now it is a rare exception to meet a person without such technology, even if that person cannot really afford it.

Given this, through the college admissions process, as well as after students arrive on campus, it is also important to consider the role of technology in today's parent-child relationships. Should one choose, he/she could be in near-constant contact with others via cell phone, text messaging, e-mail, instant messaging, or video conferencing, etc. Although many college students often appear to scoff at *another* phone call from mom or dad, Carney-Hall (2008) notes that, in reality, students welcome their parents into the collegiate process and usually benefit from their involvement. In fact, Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) found that students spoke to their parents about 1.5 times per day and students initiated the phone calls 57.6% of the time. Capitalizing on parental involvement, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) recommend parental participation in terms of orientation to the university and many institutions actually have special programs specifically for parents (e.g., Pacific University, University of Washington, Reed College, University of Alabama, etc.).

Coburn (2006) notes that it is common for students to "take out their cell phones in the middle of advising sessions to call or text message a parent for input on course selection" (p. 10). Students are also communicating with their parents much more often than before. Cell phones have enabled these "millennial students" (Coburn, 2006, p. 10), as they are called, to communicate with their parents almost instantly. No more is there a line to use the single pay phone in the dorm lounge to make that rare call home. Today's students can call their parents for advice, to complain, or for any other reason. This

communication can occur between classes, on their way to the bathroom, or as noted, during an advising session, not to mention, at any other time. Given the often consumer-minded attitude of helicopter parents, it is likely that this type of behavior is to be expected, and quite possibly, enjoyed.

One of the frequent consequences of this increased communication, Coburn (2006) notes, is the late-night phone calls from parents to the voicemail systems of college administrators reporting problems: “parental complaints about their student’s roommate who snores, the professor who speaks with an accent, the noise from the construction site next door, or the disappointing grade on a paper that ‘my son worked so hard on’” (p. 10).

Coburn (2006) also explains that parents then begin using the pronoun *we* to describe their student. Parents say things like “We’re worried that if *we* don’t register early *we* won’t get into the courses *we* want” (Coburn, 2006, p. 10). College administrators and other personnel are obliged to listen—after all, the parents are usually who is paying the bill. However, it is not likely that this sort of behavior is beneficial for the student, especially considering the psychological modeling (Bandura, 1997) that occurs and which will then influence the student in what may be perceived as negative ways. Coburn elucidates that while parents are in all probability just wanting the best for their students, what they do not realize is that they may be hampering the development of their children by advocating too much (2006). If a parent is a constant buffer for a child, will the child ever have the chance to develop into the strong, resilient, employed person he/she was sent to college to become?

THE CURRENT STUDY

The purpose of the research reported here was to further examine the influence of parental involvement in students' lives on their academic performance. As well, the measures used in the current study allowed for an exploratory look into the influence of peer attachment on student academic achievement. In addition to the quantitative measures used, qualitative data was collected directly from parents in an effort to investigate the college transition from the parent perspective.

College students identify their parents as the most influential people in their lives (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Given this assertion, and the information above, a question may be posed: what is the effect of parental involvement on today's college student? In addition, given the availability of technology and the ease with which it can be used, what effect does it have on the parent/student relationship? This study seeks to examine parental and student attachment as well as the influence technology has on this relationship. Overall, the impact of parental involvement and how parental attachment affects students will be explored.

The current study was designed to investigate the influence of students' perceptions of their attachment styles to their parents on their academic achievement as defined by grade point average (GPA) while holding constant their baseline level of academic abilities (SAT/ACT scores). Specifically, previous hypotheses (Kuh, et al.,

2005) that students' attachment style to their parents is correlated with their "school achievement" (in this case, GPA) will be tested. GPA is used because grades are often the best predictor of obtaining a degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), and in turn academic achievement. SAT scores are also important to the current study because they allow the researcher to hold constant original ability factors because it is possible that attachment style to parents is a "non-cognitive" factor that affects school performance. In this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. If students report high levels of attachment to parents and peers as measured by the IPPA then they would have higher academic outcomes as measured by GPA.
2. If students report lower levels of attachment to parents and peers as measured by the IPPA, then they will report lower levels of adaptation to college as measured by the SACQ.
3. If students are experiencing high levels of academic achievement as measured by GPA then they will have high level reports of adaptation to college as measured by the SACQ.

In addition to testing the questionnaire data models, this study was also designed to investigate parents' own perceptions of their roles in the lives of their college students. Specifically, this researcher also adds the dimension of parents' own perceptions of their role in their children's adjustment to college. This stakeholder group will be assessed separately from the student group (this design is not correlated means but two separate cohorts) in order to better explicate the role of parental involvement from the perspective of the parent, not the child. This area of research has not been consistently explored and

there is a paucity of academic research while the attention of popular culture sources (see above) has been directed to this group. The current research is an attempt to add to the existing literature by combining student data and parental perspectives into an overall understanding of the role of attachment styles on both cognitive performance (e.g., grades) and psychosocial adjustment (e.g., attachment to the university, mental health, etc.) as measured by the instruments and indicators elucidated above.

This researcher also added an additional facet of asking parents to comment on their own perceptions of their students' transition to college. This was an effort to gain more information in a qualitative format which would help create a more substantial knowledge base than quantitative research on its own. In addition, Stanley Sue, in his article on internal/external validity biases in psychological research (1999), recommends using a variety of research methods expressly for this purpose. In this article, "Science, Ethnicity, and Bias: Where Have We Gone Wrong?," Sue illustrates the overemphasis the discipline of psychology places on internal versus external validity and Sue makes a number of recommendations including using more qualitative research to see how measures actually work for diverse populations (1999). This is of critical importance for the current research because the sample used has demographic qualities such that it was necessary to explore parenting perceptions, for which there was no available quantitative measure, to see if such perceptions would elucidate the findings from the standardized measures.

METHODS

Participants

There were two sets of participants in this study: Independent samples of students and parents: Their demographics and the methodologies used to assess each group will be reviewed separately.

Student Participants: The initial recruitment goal for the number of participants was 100 undergraduate students. To that end, 150 packets were prepared and distributed to prospective participants; 56 completed packets were returned which translated into approximately a 37% return rate. This response rate is more than adequate based on available research which states that the mean response rate for completed electronic surveys is approximately 34.6% (Cook, Heath & Thompson, 2000). Further research on response rates for surveys that are not electronically based and therefore more closely resembling the present research is somewhat less clear, and perhaps more conflicted among journal editors. For example, some editors quoted in the research stated that “20% is too low, and 80% is a de facto standard...” (Johnson & Owens, 2004, p. 130) and none of the journals included in the research “reported having an established minimal response rate standard” (p. 129).

Twelve participants identified as male (21.4%), 43 as female (76.8%), and one did not identify (1.8%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years with a mean age of

19.4 years. In terms of class standing, there were 21 freshmen (37.5%), 19 sophomores (33.9%), 12 juniors (21.4%), and 1 senior (1.8%). Two (3.6%) participants identified as “5th year or higher.” In addition, most participants described themselves as traditional, first time freshmen (49 participants or 87.5%), whereas only a few described themselves as transfer students (6 or 10.7%). One participant (1.8%) did not report traditional/nontraditional status.

With regard to ethnicity, this sample is unique in that the Demographic Information Form (Appendix A) required participants to complete an open-ended item asking about ethnicity. Given this, substantial variation in ethnicity was noted across participants. The most frequently reported ethnicities were “White” (9 participants or 16.1%), and “Caucasian” (7 participants or 12.5%) followed by Hispanic (3 participants or 5.4%), Hawaiian (2 participants or 3.6%), and Japanese (2 participants or 3.6%). All participant ethnicities are detailed in Table 1.

Participants were asked to self-report their cumulative grade point average (GPA) and also asked for consent so that the researcher could obtain their cumulative GPA from the university Registrar. Many participants did not report GPA; however, of the 37 who did (66% of total sample) the mean was 3.17 on a 4.0 scale with a minimum of 2.00 and a maximum of 4.10. GPA’s obtained from the university Registrar via special consent from all 56 participants provide a somewhat different picture with a mean of 2.91, minimum of 1.37, and maximum of 3.94. Participant data that were available to be used in a Paired-Samples t-Test ($n = 37$) did not indicate a statistically significant difference in self-report versus actual cumulative GPA ($p > .05$). However, there does appear to be a clinically significant or “real-world” difference in the means of the two samples. Specifically, the

mean of the self-reported GPA was 3.17 as noted above, whereas the mean of the actual GPA for the same 37 participants was 3.04; though it is important to note that there was a low report rate, so implying this difference may simply be an artifact of who reported.

The concept that students commonly misreport their GPA when asked to self-report is not new (Wilson & Zietz, 2004; Zimmerman, Caldwell, & Bernat, 2002) and has been previously called the “Lake Wobegon” effect (Maxwell & Lopus, 1994). The Lake Wobegon Effect is so dubbed from the American Public Radio show “A Prairie Home Companion” in which Garrison Keillor informs his listening audience that in the small town of Lake Wobegon, “all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average” (Lee, 1991). Thus, students who misreport their GPA to be higher than it actually is would be deemed to be perceiving themselves to be above average.

Parent Participants: Parent participants were recruited from a convenience sample consisting of the members of the Parent Association hosted by a small liberal arts university in the Pacific Northwest. Arrangements were made to meet with members of the Parent Association as part of their regular meeting through the Student Life Department at the university. Parent participants were briefed about the study, in addition to the written explanations contained in the study packet. Qualitative data were collected in a focus group (Patton, 2002) format using a variety of questions (Appendix E) devised after consulting the research, while also allowing for follow-up questions as members of the group influenced each other’s responses. The session lasted for approximately two hours and involved ten participants. It should be noted that this was not a matched sample

of parents; they were not the parents of the students who responded to the questionnaires in the other portion of this study.

The parent group consisted of four males and six females. The age range was 48-64 years, with one person reporting: “old enough to mother [a] college student” instead of actual age. The mean age was 56 years for reporting participants. All parent participants reported having “some college” or higher with regard to their own educational level. In addition, all parents reported that their student came to the sample university as a new, traditional-aged freshman; not a transfer student. Further, all members of the Parent Association reported being Caucasian of European descent. With regard to the amount of financial support provided to their college students, two people did not report; however, other responses ranged from “very small amount” to “100%.”

Materials/Instruments

Two instruments were used in the current study as well as a comprehensive demographic information questionnaire for students (Appendix A) and a separate form for parent participants (Appendix B). In addition, student (Appendix C) and parent (Appendix D) participants were asked to complete an Informed Consent Form. For student participants, the Informed Consent Form included a section asking permission to obtain GPA records from the university Registrar.

The specific instruments used included the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989) and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). These instruments were selected for this study because each operationalizes potentially influential non-cognitive factors found

to predict or suspected to predict performance in college and were administered to student participants, only.

To investigate the unique perceptions of parents of college students, parents responded to a open-ended interview protocol (Appendix E). The protocol included questions that covered these domains: the transition to college for both students and parents, student adaptation to college, parental involvement in students' lives/attachment relationships, and the role of technology in the parent/student relationship. These domains were selected because they relate to the items on the two standardized measures completed by student participants (IPPA and SACQ) and also provide some insight with regard to the role of technology in the college student/parent relationship.

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire

The SACQ is a commonly administered, 67-item, self-report questionnaire. It is divided into four subscales including academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment and provides scores on each scale as well as a full-scale score. The academic subscale is focused on student adjustment to academic demands in college. The social adjustment subscale is focused on interpersonal and societal demands commonly encountered in college. The personal-emotional subscale is focused on psychological and physical well-being in college; and the attachment subscale is focused on student feelings about being in college and his/her specific attachment to the institution. Students rate each item on a 9-point continuum that ranges from "Applies Very Closely to Me" to "Doesn't Apply to Me at All" which is converted to numerical values when scored by a rater. In general, the higher the score the more well-adjusted to college he/she is considered to be. It should also be noted that the SACQ demonstrates

good reliability and validity (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Specifically, coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) values for reliability range from .81 to .90 for the Academic Adjustment subscale, from .83 to .91 for the Social Adjustment subscale, from .77 to .86 for the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale, from .85 to .91 for the Attachment subscale, and from .92 to .95 for the Full Scale (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Alpha coefficients for validity are also strong (Academic Adjustment/Social Adjustment, .45 and .39; Academic Adjustment/Personal-Emotional Adjustment, .60 and .55; and Social Adjustment/Personal-Emotional Adjustment, .49 and .42; Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

The IPPA is a measure that was originally developed to assess the perceptions adolescents' have about the cognitive and affective dimensions of their relationships with their parents/caregivers and close friends (Armsden & Greenberg, 1980s). Specifically, the measure was designed to assess how well these individuals serve in terms of being sources of psychological security (Armsden & Greenberg, 1980s). Although not as commonly used as the SACQ, the IPPA is still an asset in the areas of research and education.

The current version of the IPPA consists of a total of 75 self-report items divided into three scales that each include 25 items. The measure as a whole is designed to assess attachment on a multifactorial level in late adolescence through assessing responses to items asking about the participant's relationship with his/her mother or female caregiver; father or male caregiver; and close friends (Armsden & Greenberg, 1980s; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Response categories for each item are set on a 5-point Likert scale and include choices ranging from "Almost never or never true" to "Almost always or always

true.” Responses are converted to a numerical interpretation for scoring purposes. In general, the higher the score, more quality level of attachment the participant has. It should also be noted that the IPPA demonstrates good reliability (coefficient alpha of .20 to .76 for the Parent Attachment subscale; coefficient alpha of .27 to .79 for the Peer Attachment subscale) and validity (coefficient alpha of .93 for the Parent Attachment subscale; coefficient alpha of .86 for the Peer Attachment subscale; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Procedure

Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon (#155-08) and data collection occurred during November and December 2008 at a small liberal arts university in the Pacific Northwest. Undergraduate student participants were recruited from psychology courses, the student union building on campus, and in the building that houses the psychology department. Participants were provided with a packet prepared in advance that included an envelope containing study materials (SACQ, IPPA, demographic information form), informed consent forms, and a participation receipt that could be turned in for course credit in psychology courses where such credit was offered. As part of the demographics, participants were asked to self-report their GPA as well as give consent for researchers to obtain their GPA from the university registrar.

Student participants were briefed about the study, in addition to the written explanations contained in the study packet, then asked to complete the study materials and return them via campus mail systems to the researcher or research advisor. As noted

above, 150 packets were distributed and 56 were returned. Data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 (SPSS, Inc., 2007).

Parent participants were briefed about the study, in addition to the written explanations contained in the study packet, then prompted to answer qualitative questions in a focus group (Patton, 2002) format. A focus group format was chosen for this study because it allows for participants to respond in any way they please to the questions asked during a session (Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004). In turn, data garnered from a focus group can help provide information about the combined local perspectives of the group members. Although such data are not generalizable, they can be useful for providing some naturalistic insight implying that unlike quantitative data, the researcher can learn about more of the meaning behind the response through observing participant “emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions” (Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004, p. 2).

Data were analyzed using a rigorous phenomenological approach suggested by Creswell (2007). The Principal Investigator (PI) and a research assistant independently reviewed the transcript, identified significant statements, created meaning units, and clustered themes. These steps were accomplished through underlining, highlighting, and circling key words and phrases. Once themes were identified and elucidated, a discussion of differences took place. The PI and the research assistant then discussed textural and structural descriptions and later combined the descriptions into an exhaustive description of the essential invariant structure of the content (Creswell, 2007). These steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness (as cited in Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006; Golafshani, 2003) of the qualitative data.

RESULTS

The current study included two main components. The first was designed to investigate the influence of attachment on student achievement in college while taking into consideration “baseline academic abilities.” The second component was designed to investigate parent perceptions of their student’s college experience from a more anecdotal viewpoint.

The IPPA contains three subscales intended to represent attachment to the mother/female guardian, father/male guardian, and peers/friends. The SACQ contains four subscales in addition to the full scale score of overall adaptation to college. These scales include academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment. In this study, GPA is used as an indicator of current academic achievement and SAT/ACT scores are used as indicators of baseline level of academic abilities.

Normality

It should be noted that due to the relatively small sample size, normality of the distribution of the scores was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic. It was found that the Social Adjustment scale of the SACQ violated the assumption of normality ($p = .002$). As well, the mother/female guardian ($p = .012$) and the father/male guardian ($p = .013$) attachment scales of the IPPA also violated the assumption of normality. All

other scales were indicated as normal ($p > .05$). Given that “many scales and measures used in the social sciences have scores that are skewed” (Pallant, 2007, p. 62), and rather than indicating a problem with the scale, this sort of asymmetry more likely “reflects the underlying nature of the construct being measured” (Pallant, 2007, p. 62), it was decided that despite the possible skewedness indicated by the Kolomogorov-Smirnov statistic, the scales in question were appropriate to be used in further analyses (Pallant, 2007).

Demographic Factors and Descriptive Results

With regard to ethnicity, Levene’s test for equality of variances was performed for each subscale on both measures completed by student participants. All subscales tested except one (attachment to peers on the IPPA, $p > .05$) were significant ($p < .05$) suggesting that the variances are not equal and that the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been violated. However, in this case, it is important to note that there is a sizeable difference in the number of participants in each ethnic category ranging from one (“Other”) to 33 (“Euroamerican”) which could indicate a lack of power for Levene’s test for equality of variances. Given this, an ANOVA was performed in the same conditions. Results of the ANOVA suggested no statistically significant difference ($p > .05$) for ethnicity on any subscale, meaning no difference in variance among ethnic groups. This is a positive aspect of this study because it demonstrates that members of different ethnic groups did not differ in how they responded in this study. However, these results are cautiously interpreted because of the small sample size.

Regarding gender, no statistically significant difference was noted between groups of student participants on Levene’s test for equality of variances or ANOVA ($p > .05$). In addition, no statistically significant differences were noted between groups for

parental educational level ($p > .05$). Thus, there were no significant differences between genders in scores on the two scales (SACQ and IPPA).

Parent/Guardian Educational Level was not found to be significantly correlated with any scale except the Social Adaptation subscale of the SACQ [$F(9, 42) = 2.424, p < .05$]. All other correlations were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). It should also be noted that Levene's test did indicate possible skewedness on the mother/female guardian scale of the IPPA ($p < .05$) such that scores appeared to cluster at the lower end.

Parental/guardian educational level was also not found to be correlated with student GPA ($p > .05$). This is likely because most parent/guardian(s) reported by the student participants on the demographic information form were said to have at least some college experience. See Appendix F for more detailed information as to parental demographics.

Multiple regression was used to assess the ability of parent/guardian financial support to predict student outcomes on the IPPA (attachment) and SACQ (adaptation to college). Financial support from parents/guardians was not a statistically significant predictor of student scores on either the IPPA or the SACQ ($r=.24$ $R^2=.06$ $p > .05$). It should be noted that a large number of participants ($n=13$) did not report whether or not they received financial help from parents/guardians. Another important finding included that there was no clear pattern or correlation of the scores on the IPPA (mother or father subscales) and financial aid received from parents ($p > .05$). In addition, ten participants reported receiving 100% of their needed financial support from parents/guardians and two participants reported receiving substantially more than the cost of attendance from their parents/guardians in terms of financial assistance.

Also of note is the number of hours students reported working while in school. Forty-one participants reported working up to 56 hours per week while going to school. Of the 41 respondents in this category, 19 reported working 0 hours per week. If those who did not report in this category ($n=15$) are assumed to be working zero hours per week, it would hold that most participants in this study ($n=34$), do not work to help pay for school or other expenses. Multiple regression was also used to test the ability of hours worked to predict the overall scores on the SACQ and the IPPA. Results of this regression were not statistically significant ($R=.29$ $R^2=.08$; $p > .05$).

Attachment Influence on College Adjustment and Academics

The attachment as measured by the father/male guardian scale of the IPPA was found to account for 43% of the variability in overall student adjustment as measured by the SACQ Full Scale score ($R=.85$ $R^2=.72$ $p < .05$; see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.849 ^a	.722	.431	7.17346	.722	2.488	25	24	.014

a. Predictors: (Constant), IPPA25F, IPPA9F, IPPA4F, IPPA8F, IPPA10F, IPPA6F, IPPA23F, IPPA11F, IPPA18F, IPPA5F, IPPA13F, IPPA7F, IPPA21F, IPPA19F, IPPA14F, IPPA15F, IPPA16F, IPPA12F, IPPA17F, IPPA1F, IPPA20F, IPPA22F, IPPA24F, IPPA2F, IPPA3F

Table 2.

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3200.196	25	128.008	2.488	.014 ^a
	Residual	1235.006	24	51.459		
	Total	4435.202	49			

a. Predictors: (Constant), IPPA25F, IPPA9F, IPPA4F, IPPA8F, IPPA10F, IPPA6F, IPPA23F, IPPA11F, IPPA18F, IPPA5F, IPPA13F, IPPA7F, IPPA21F, IPPA19F, IPPA14F, IPPA15F, IPPA16F, IPPA12F, IPPA17F, IPPA1F, IPPA20F, IPPA22F, IPPA24F, IPPA2F, IPPA3F

b. Dependent Variable: SACQFS

In addition, ANOVA results indicate that the model was significant [$F(25, 24) = 2.49, p = .01$]. However, what is not known is which predictors made the largest contribution to the predictive value of the overall model. Therefore, individual items that made up the father/male guardian scale of the IPPA were tested. It was determined that items 4, 5, 7, 16, 22, and 25, were making statistically significant unique contributions to the regression model ($p < .05$; see Appendix G for IPPA items). Of these, item 4 (“My father accepts me as I am.”) had the strongest unique contribution to explaining college adjustment as measured by the SACQ Full Scale when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled for ($\beta = -1.20, p < .05$). It should be noted that the other IPPA scales were not found to be statistically significant predictors of the SACQ ($p > .05$).

A One Way Between Groups Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the effect of actual GPA as reported by the university registrar on each scale of the SACQ. The model was found to be statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level indicating a relationship between adaptation to college and GPA. SAT scores were also included in the model and a statistical significance was noted when SAT scores were

entered ($p < .05$) indicating a significant, positive correlation between SAT scores and GPA ($\beta = .39$) [$F(6, 23) = 3.6, p < .05$]. No statistically significant relationships were found between the IPPA and GPA or SAT ($\beta = .39; p > .05$).

The relationship between attachment as measured by the IPPA and academic achievement as measured by GPA was investigated using Pearson correlations. There were no direct correlations found between any of the IPPA scales and GPA (mother/female guardian, $r = -.19, n = 56, p > .05$; father/male guardian, $r = .18, n = 56, p > .05$; peer, $r = .00, n = 56, p > .05$).

Despite the lack of relationship with actual GPA, the IPPA father/male guardian scale was found to be correlated directly with the SACQ Full Scale ($r = .401, n = 52, p < .05$). This indicates a strong positive relationship between respondents' attachment to their male parent and their reported level of adaptation to college. The IPPA father/male guardian scale was also correlated with the SACQ Academic Adjustment Scale ($r = .40, n = 56, p < .05$), and the Social Adjustment Scale ($r = .34, n = 56, p < .05$). No other correlations were noted between IPPA and SACQ Scales ($p > .05$). Further Pearson Correlation analysis revealed that the SACQ Full Scale scores were not only correlated with the IPPA father/male guardian score, but also GPA ($r = .28, n = 56, p < .05$). However, these analyses also indicated that SACQ scores were not related to SAT scores ($p > .05$).

Qualitative Analyses of Focus Group Responses

The themes that emerged from the parent focus group and the overall focus group experience are discussed in the following paragraphs. As noted above, the identification of the themes involved was ascertained through a rigorous approach in an effort to ensure

trustworthiness of the data (as cited in Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006; Golafshani, 2003). It should be noted that trustworthiness is established when the findings, themes in the case of the current research, reflect the meanings given by participants as closely as possible (as cited in Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

The process of establishing trustworthiness included the use of a research assistant who read and identified themes independently from the PI. In addition to these steps, a senior research advisor reviewed the results of the methods used to verify the themes of the study. Given the rigorous techniques of the methods used as well as the convergence of topics by the PI and research assistant, it is presumed that the themes arrived at are reliable and valid.

Themes

Though a number of themes emerged from the focus group, five prominent themes were identified: 1) maintained closeness, 2) rough transition to college, 3) replete communication, 4) changed relationship as the student matures, and 5) parental involvement at healthy levels.

Maintained Closeness. Regarding the “letting go” process, which included preparing to send the child to college, parent participants remarked with enthusiasm that their children were having good experiences in college. Such positive experiences were specifically noted at the sample university where parents were members of the Parent Association. The opportunity to participate in university activities and events had been helpful for these parents as it had fostered more of a connection with the university community their child(ren) had become a part of. One consistent topic was the frequency with which the children of these particular parents return home as many returned every

weekend. One parent commented that although she was glad her daughter had attended a college within close proximity to home, she was surprised to have to tell her to stay away.

Rough Transition to College. The “leaving” process (when the child left for college) was a varied experience for the parents in the focus group. Some parents reported that when their children left home it was “easy” or something they were “used to.” This specifically occurred in the case of a single parent who shared custody. Other parents reported feeling “crushed” when their first child left for college and having had an easier time when their second child left. Parents also reported being “very concerned” about what to do with their time because they had always volunteered and been involved with activities related to their children. Another parent, who is a single mother, reported feeling proud of her son while also missing parts of the relationship they used to have and being afraid of “becoming the old cat lady.” She stated resolutely, “I’m proud that he’s doing so well at school, but lonely sometimes and afraid of becoming the old cat lady; I think I’m ready to move on.”

In addition, several parents reported feeling akin to storage facilities for their students. In some cases, parents stated that they were dealing with not only their children’s things but also their own parent’s things because of changing family and health circumstances of aging family members. Though many positive aspects of the move to college have occurred, such as parents becoming better friends (reported with smiles) with each other and relationships improving between parents and children, nearly all focus group participants reported some sort of rough transition (reported with a heavy sighs), leading up to and perhaps after the child left home. One parent even described her daughter as a “witch” before she left home whereas another commented that “life was

hell at our house before that kid left;” and another set of parents reported that their son had “mean and nasty moments before leaving [for college].”

As for a source of the attitudes and angst of the pre-college students, many of the parents appeared to attribute it to their “kids pushing back.” However, Kastner and Wyatt (2002) suggest that children who are between high school graduation and their first day of college often assume that the rules of home are obsolete and that parents should just be “cool” with almost anything they want.

When asked if they ever felt that they had done too much or too little for their students, parents varied in their responses. However a common theme included their own struggles with finding ways to pursue and maintain communication and connection with their child/student.

The underlying theme to these struggles was that most parents, in hindsight, wish they would have communicated more with their children in ways that would have allowed the parents to learn if their children had hopes and dreams that would not have involved college. All of these parents had the expectation that their children would attend college and, now that their children are college students, have been able to see that this has come at varying degrees of success. For example, one mother commented several times (perhaps with some regret) that one of her children might have been better suited to education more focused on auto-mechanics rather than the traditional college path. Other parents stated: “Each child has gifts; they open them at different times;” and “Some students aren’t traditional and need to find their own way” with regard to some of their children’s college experiences that had included some trouble.

When asked about their concerns in relation to sending their child to college, what parents worried about included “negative influences like sex, drugs, and Rock’n’Roll,” as well as other concerns related to their students’ health, academic success, and coming home. One parent remarked in a purposeful way, “parents will never stop worrying about kids, but want to try to let go enough so they can grow up.”

Parents were asked, in hindsight, what they would do differently in regard to the letting go process and sending their children to college. Most did not have anything they would like to “do-over.” However, one parent suggested that having higher levels of trust in his student might have been more appropriate.

Replete Communication. Replete communication is full and complete communication between students and their parents. Specific to students, they are known to be frequent communicators through a variety of means and often use the very latest technology (e.g., social networking websites, text messaging, etc.) when they connect. It is common for the level of communication between students/children and parents to increase significantly when the students leave home for college. For example, high school seniors experiencing the “senioritis” phenomenon may push back against their parent’s rules, or avoid talking to parents (Kastern & Wyatt, 2002), whereas many college freshman have some form of daily communication with their parents (Carney-Hall, 2008).

With regard to the focus group, parents were asked about the role of technology in their relationships with their students. Most reported having some sort of communication with their children on a daily basis, occurring most often via telephone (cell phone). However, e-mailing, texting, picture messaging, instant messaging, and other methods of

communication, such as social networking websites like Facebook © 2009, were mentioned as being useful methods of interaction. One parent mentioned that the frequency of communication ebbed and flowed “depending on the crisis or money needs” of the student. Most parents agreed that the current communication styles, as opposed to pre-college, were more akin to friendships than the traditional parent/child relationship. It was also noted that male children communicated less frequently than female children. One parent made the statement: “I still have to beg my son to call me.” Other parents reported that, despite seeing their children on weekends they still email and text with each other frequently.

From the parent’s point of view, contact could be viewed as a way of keeping an eye on their investment (Hoover, 2008), in addition to looking out for the best interests of their children. From the students’ point of view, contact is often warranted to gain advice about a class or receive comfort about a situation they might find distressing (Coburn, 2006). However, it is often noted by college administrators that students are initiating contact with their parents at least “several times a week” and that this contact commonly occurs “during their five minute walk between classes” to name one example (Coburn, 2006, p. 10). Given that students may be calling their parents for advice, to unload their problems, or for any number of other reasons, it seems that the parents are most often available on the other end of the line.

Most parents also reported having received a “dump phone call.” That is to say, most parents have received a call from their college student who is, at the moment of the call decidedly unglued, upset, and/or beside him/herself for some reason. Some parents confirmed, with furrowed brows that they had experienced more than one dump phone

call, though the calls decreased in frequency over time. All parents in the focus group agreed that they felt more savvy than other parents they know regarding the phenomenon of dump phone calls and were better able to handle it when it happened to them due to the education provided through their close association with the university and its resources. Specifically, many of them commented that the university had made good efforts to inform them of things that could happen when their children go away to college, including the dump phone call.

Changed Relationship as the Student Matures. With regard to how parents felt their relationship with their student had changed, most commented that they felt as if they see their students when s/he needs or wants something. However, most parents also proudly noted that their children have become more adult and much less dependent since going to college, especially with regard to knowledge, attitude, and point of view. Specifically, parents noted that they are able to have more exciting, in-depth conversations with their students and that they enjoy seeing how their children are integrating the world into different points of view. Also, one father noted that in his daughter's first year of college, when she would call home he "knew the call wasn't for [him]" so he would simply hand the phone to his wife when she called. However, he noted that in more recent times, as his daughter is a little older and past her first year, she makes more of an effort to have an equal relationship with both him and her mother. He reported that he feels much better about their relationship now and recognizes that his daughter is making an effort to spend time with both of her parents.

Parental Involvement at Healthy Levels. When asked if they ever felt over-involved in their student's life at college, this group of parents responded largely that

they tried hard not to be over-involved; that their role was much more to be ambassadors for the university. However, they did note that the Parent Association was a way for them to be involved and another way to show their children that they cared. They were careful to point out that, when on campus for parent activities, they were careful to leave the choice to their student of whether or not to get together. Most parents agreed that their relationships with their students are becoming closer-knit, but more adult in nature over time. Parents pointed out that they appreciated feeling like they could begin to consider their older children more as peers and they all expressed a great sense of pride in their adult-children. In addition, if the report of these parents is an indication, the attachment relationship between themselves and their children is secure and closely related to the authoritative parenting style that is believed to be so positive (Baumrind, 1991).

The group was also asked their opinion about helicopter parents. With grimaces on their faces, they nodded their recognition of the term. Some of them scoffed at some imagined or remembered helicopter parent moment. Then they responded that they want to advise other parents to not be helicopter parents or hover over their children in any way. They also acknowledged that sometimes the students need to tell the parents not to hover since often the helicopter parent is unaware of his/her behavior and may need it brought to awareness. This is especially true for “stealth helicopter parents” which they defined as helicopter parents who utilize special connections as a means to get things done for their children—meaning, parents who intervene with college/university sources on behalf of their child but who may not tell the child.

Focus Group, Overall

The focus group was a highly productive meeting and all participants were excited to participate. Their parting comments at the conclusion of the gathering suggested that they enjoyed the session and appreciated the opportunity to talk about their experience with each other and have an outlet for some of their triumphs, but more importantly, some of their tribulations. Many parents commented that they “never get to talk about their experience” with regard to sending their children to college and this opportunity was enlightening for them, just as it was for the researchers.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of parental involvement in students' lives and their influence on their academic performance and adjustment to college. The effect of peers on student academic performance was also investigated. Specifically, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was administered to student participants to determine their level of attachment to those individuals. Aside from the IPPA, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was utilized to determine students' level of adjustment to college. In addition to the quantitative measures used, qualitative data collection occurred through the use of a focus group (Patton, 2002) so that a more substantial knowledge base could be created with regard to the parent perspective on attachment to their children and the transition to college (Sue, 1999).

Throughout this study, specific attention was paid to the concept of helicopter parents and their effect on student academic performance in and adjustment to college. Although an exiguous number of primary source research articles exist on this topic, or the topic of helicopter parents alone, there are a myriad of references in the popular media from *O* (Robb, 2008) to *The Washington Post* (Rothman, 2008) among others. Thus, this study makes a unique contribution to the literature and begins to explicate

some of the origins of the helicopter parent as well as the effects them on their college-attending children.

Summary of Results: Student Participants

The hypothesis that students reporting high levels of attachment to parents and peers as measured by the IPPA would evidence higher academic outcomes as measured by GPA was not supported. Results did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. However, it was clear that the self-report of students' on attachment to their father or male guardian on the IPPA accounted for a significant amount of the variability in their adjustment to college as measured by the SACQ. No other statistically significant models of attachment were found as influencing student adjustment to college.

The hypothesis that students who reported lower levels of attachment to parents and peers as measured by the IPPA would also report lower levels of adaptation to college as measured by the SACQ was found to be supported by the IPPA father/male guardian scale, only. This hypothesis was not supported for the mother/female guardian nor the peer scales of the IPPA. Further analysis revealed that the father/male guardian scale of the IPPA was also positively correlated with the SACQ Academic Adjustment Scale and the Social Adjustment Scale indicating that the level of attachment a child has with his/her father is related to some aspects of college student adjustment.

The hypothesis that students experiencing high levels of academic achievement as measured by GPA, would report high levels of adaptation to college, as measured by the SACQ, was supported by the SACQ Full Scale scores. Specifically, when SACQ Full Scale Scores and the father/male guardian scale of the IPPA were examined and GPA is

held constant, a relationship becomes apparent that is not perceptible when GPA is not held constant. More explicitly, the attachment as measured by the father/male guardian scale of the IPPA was found to account for 43% of the variability in overall student adjustment as measured by the SACQ Full Scale score.

It is likely that the level of attachment reported with regard to father/male guardians is indicative of a more secure attachment with the father/male figure than mother/female figure and peers given the level of variability the corresponding IPPA scale accounts for in student adaptation to college. In fact, previous research has indicated that persons with more secure attachment to parents also evidenced better adjustment to college (Danford, 2008; Herrmann, 2008). Unique to the current study is the finding that the student's reported relationship to the male parent was a better predictor of student adaptation to college than peers or the female parent. This is notable as previous research has indicated that the female parent maintained more influence than the male parent in terms of facilitating college adjustment (Wytenbach, 2008).

Summary of Results: Parent Participants

Qualitative data collected from parent participants are advantageous in terms of providing a unique supplement to the quantitative data and such information uniquely contributes to the literature. Specifically, it is apparent from the information collected that the parent participants in this study do not consider themselves to be helicopter parents rather; they believe themselves to have a healthy level of involvement in the lives of their college students. These parents were very particular in reporting their endeavor not to become helicopter parents As such, they limit their involvement and that they check-in

with their students for approval when considering involvement with their students' university, specifically the Parent Association.

Another point that was made clear by this group of parents included the high level of communication with their students. Most parents reported communicating with their students on a daily basis. Further, these parents reported that they have relatively secure relationships with their children (e.g., parents made statements reflecting their feelings of pride in their children's accomplishments, positive camaraderie, and close-knit connections), and of those who reported knowing their students' GPA, only one reported a GPA below 3.1.

Implications of the Results

The results of this study suggest that parental involvement, but not such over-involvement as could be classified as a helicopter parent, is appropriate, supportive, and helpful in terms of student adaptation to college and academic success. According to the findings of this research, the specific role of male parents/guardians is demonstrated as critical. Such results are in contrast to other research which indicated the female parent relationship was critical to student adjustment to college (Wyttenbach, 2008).

Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study

The current study makes a unique contribution to the literature both in subject matter and in research structure. The combined use of both quantitative and qualitative data provides an exceptional means of analysis. In addition, the demographic makeup of the student sample used in this study was diverse and provides a rare participant data set with which to work. However, several limitations do exist; most notable is the small sample size for both the student and parent participants. As well, the parent participants

were a relatively homogenous group in terms of their demographics and, because their participation was obtained through convenience sampling, they do not provide a representative data set of the greater parental population. Despite this, the data garnered from the focus group provide a point of view not yet garnered in the realm of empirical study on the current topic and were a distinctive component in this study.

Directions for Future Research

Although it was not possible to investigate all of the details of attachment and student adjustment in the current study, it is likely that a more detailed exploration of such dynamics would be beneficial in future investigations. Further, future studies would benefit from the involvement of additional participants in an effort to acquire larger sample sizes. Such studies may consider paired participant sampling with parent and student subjects. Additional study should occur in the area of helicopter parents and student adaptation to college, in general, while also with regard to helicopter parents specifically (e.g., how did helicopter parents become helicopter parents; what reinforces such behavior, etc.). Another area of interest for future study is the discrepancy between the current findings that male parents are more influential in terms of facilitating college adjustment than female parents and Wytenbach's (2008) findings that female parents are more influential.

Conclusions

This study was designed to investigate the influence of students' perceptions of their attachment styles to their parents on the influence it has on their adaptation to college and academic achievement. It was found that a direct relationship between attachment and GPA did not exist; however, attachment to the father/male guardian

accounts for 43% of the variability in student adjustment when GPA is held constant. In addition, several themes were elucidated from the parent focus group including, maintained closeness, rough transition to college, replete communication, changed relationship as the student matures, and parental involvement at healthy levels. In conclusion, parental over-involvement, or being a “helicopter parent” was not found to correlate with college adjustment or high GPA, while a moderate level of parental involvement, especially on the part of the father/male guardian is very helpful for college students.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information Form: Student Participants

“Parental attachment styles and traditional undergraduates' adjustment to college.”

Please complete those items that apply to you.

Age (years): _____

Gender: _____

Class/Personal Standing (circle one):

↑ Freshman ↑ Sophomore ↑ Junior Senior ↑ 5th year or higher Parent Guardian

Student's current cumulative GPA: _____

Student's SAT/ACT score(s): _____

I (or my student) came to Pacific as a:

- ↑ new freshman
- ↑ transfer student

If I (or my student) transferred to Pacific, I (or my student) came from a:

- ↑ community or junior college in state
- ↑ community or junior college out of state
- ↑ four year college/university in state
- ↑ four year college/university out of state
- ↑ Other: _____

If I (or my student) transferred to Pacific, I (or my student) transferred with:

- ↑ some college credits
- ↑ a Certificate from an accredited Junior or Community College
- ↑ an Associate's Degree from an accredited Junior or Community College

When I (or my student) entered Pacific, my (his/her) intended Academic Major was: _____

When I (or my student) entered Pacific, my (his/her) intended Academic Minor was: _____

I (or my student) have changed my Academic Major and/or Minor since entering college: YES or NO

If I (or my student) changed my Academic Major and/or Minor, it/they are *currently*:

Academic Major(s): _____

Academic Minor(s): _____

Parent/Guardian Educational Level: _____

Dollar amount and/or percent of financial support for student provided by parent/guardian(s): _____

Number of hours worked in return for financial compensation each week: _____

Ethnicity:

Please describe (the ethnic background of your parents and yourself. This is an open-ended question, so please feel free to put in any and all ethnicities, nationalities, or ancestries that you think apply to the parents you will be referring to in the questionnaires in this study (if you only have one parent, just indicate “not applicable” in the other space; If you have multiple parents of the same gender, please complete the information below in the open space provided).

My mother's/female parent's ethnic ancestry(ies): _____

My father's/male parent's ethnic ancestry(ies): _____

I consider my (my student's) ethnicity to be: _____

Additional parent information: _____

Appendix B

Demographic Information Form: Parent/Guardian Participants "Parental attachment styles and traditional undergraduates' adjustment to college."

Please complete those items that apply to you.

Age (years): _____

Gender: _____

Student Class/Personal Standing (circle one):

↑ Freshman ↑ Sophomore ↑ Junior Senior ↑ 5th year or higher Parent Guardian

Student's current cumulative GPA: _____

Student's SAT/ACT score(s): _____

Student came to Pacific or (_____) (please write in the institution name if not Pacific University) as a (circle one):

↑ new freshman transfer student

If my student transferred to his/her current college, he/she transferred from a:

- ↑ ____community or junior college in state
- ↑ ____community or junior college out of state
- ↑ ____four year college/university in state
- ↑ ____four year college/university out of state
- ↑ ____Other: _____

If my student transferred to college, my student transferred with:

- ↑ ____some college credits
- ↑ ____a Certificate from an accredited Junior or Community College
- ↑ ____an Associate's Degree from an accredited Junior or Community College

When my student entered college, his/her intended Academic Major was: _____

When my student entered college, his/her intended Academic Minor was: _____

My student has changed his/her Academic Major and/or Minor since entering college: YES or NO

If I my student changed his/her Academic Major and/or Minor, it/they are currently:

Academic Major(s): _____

Academic Minor(s): _____

Parent/Guardian Educational Level: _____

Dollar amount and/or percent of financial support for student provided by parent/guardian(s): _____

Number of hours student works in return for financial compensation each week: _____

Ethnicity:

Please describe (the ethnic background of your parents and yourself. This is an open-ended question, so please feel free to put in any and all ethnicities, nationalities, or ancestries that you think apply to the parents you will be referring to in the questionnaires in this study (if you only have one parent, just indicate "not applicable" in the other space; If you have multiple parents of the same gender, please complete the information below in the open space provided).

My mother's/female parent's ethnic ancestry(ies): _____

My father's/male parent's ethnic ancestry(ies): _____

I consider my student's ethnicity to be: _____

Additional parent information: _____

Appendix C

Pacific University IRB 155-08

Informed Consent Form: Student**1. Study Title****Parental attachment styles and traditional undergraduates' adjustment to college.****2. Study Personnel**

	Principal Investigator	Dissertation Research Advisor	Dissertation Chairperson
Name	Joel Lampert, MS	Alyson Burns-Glover, PhD	Dan McKittrick, PhD
Institution	Pacific University	Pacific University	Pacific University
Program	SPP	A & S	SPP
Email	joel@pacificu.edu	doctorboo@pacificu.edu	mckitrid@pacificu.edu
Telephone	503-577-6778	503-352-1545	503-352-7321
	Joel Lampert, MS	Alyson Burns-Glover, PhD	Dan McKittrick, PhD

3. Study Location and Dates

The study is expected to begin in October 2008, and to be completed in June 2009. The study will take place at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon.

4. Study Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to be in a research study of attachment styles and adjustment to college. You were invited to participate because you are a college student. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This study is being conducted by Joel Lampert, MS, a student in the Pacific University School of Professional Psychology. The study is being overseen by faculty members, Dr. Alyson L. Burns-Glover and Dr. Daniel S. McKittrick. The purpose of this study is to investigate and assess the relationship between measures of students' relationships with their parents and their student adjustment to college using both questionnaire and interview methods.

5. Study Materials and Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), and a demographic information form. The SACQ was developed by Baker and Siryk (1989) and is a 67 item self-report questionnaire most often used to

measure academic and social adjustment to college, personal-emotional adjustment, and goal commitment/institutional attachment. The IPPA was developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) and is a self-report measure designed to assess the nature of feelings toward attachment figures. In addition, you will be asked to give permission for the researcher to obtain your cumulative GPA and SAT scores from the Registrar's Office.

6. Participant Characteristics and Exclusionary Criteria

Only participants who meet the following conditions will be included in the study: currently enrolled college students who are 18-21 years of age. Adults who have students enrolled at Pacific University. Participants who do not meet the above criteria will be excluded from the study.

7. Anticipated Risks and Steps Taken to Avoid Them

There are risks to participating in this research. Although unlikely, possible risks include experiencing some discomfort completing measures that ask about your level of adjustment to college and minimal chance of breach of confidentiality.

8. Anticipated Direct Benefits to Participants

There are no direct benefits to participating in this research.

9. Clinical Alternatives (i.e., alternative to the proposed procedure) that may be advantageous to participants

N/A

10. Participant Payment

N/A

11. Medical Care and Compensation In the Event of Accidental Injury

During your participation in this project it is important to understand that you are not a Pacific University clinic patient or client, nor will you be receiving complete medical care, psychological or mental health care as a result of your participation in this study. If you are injured during your participation in this study and it is not due to negligence by Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the research, you should not expect to receive compensation or medical care from Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the study.

Should you feel the need to seek psychological or mental health care on your own at Pacific University, you may contact the Student Counseling Center at 503-352-2191.

12. Adverse Event Reporting Plan

Should an unexpected and/or adverse reaction or event occur, the reaction/event will be immediately reported to the Principal Investigator, Joel Lampert, MS (503-352-1545), the Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisors, Dr. Alyson Burns-Glover (503-352-1545) and Dr. Dan McKittrick (503-352-7321), and the Institutional Review Board (503-352-2112) at Pacific University.

13. Promise of Privacy

A) The records of this study will be kept private. All information provided by participants will be kept confidential and locked in a cabinet in the researcher's office. The informed consent form will be kept separate from any data that may be collected. If the results of this study are to be presented or published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify the individual participants. Only the principal investigator and the faculty advisors will have access to the research materials.

B) If you complete this part of our study, you may be contacted at a later date to also participate in a private interview regarding your experiences of college life. At the end of this permission slip you will be asked to check, "yes, I am willing to be contacted to participate in a follow up interview" or "no, I prefer not to be contacted to participate in a follow up interview."

C) In order for us to fully understand the experience of students while they attend this institution, we will also be asking you to provide us with a college/university identification number to cross-reference your responses to our study with the data that admissions, academic programs, financial aid, and the registrar's office maintain. We will not report any information individually or with your name or uniquely identifying characteristics. We are only interested in analyzing and reporting general patterns among students.

D) Your signature on **this** informed consent form acts as a release of your educational records in keeping with the Pacific University policies and procedures for implementing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Buckley Amendment) as contained in the student handbook. This may include but is not limited to records from admissions, registrars and financial aid offices. All of this information will only be used to correlate with other data collected in this study and to create a database of participants in the study which will follow student development and adjustment to college on this campus. Such information will never be reported in such a way that your confidentiality would be violated. Should you wish to amend this agreement to access to records, you can contact Joel Lampert, MS, Dr. Alyson Burns-Glover, or Dr. Dan McKittrick and remove your release. If you do not contact either the researcher or a faculty advisor, this agreement will remain in effect until the completion of your program at Pacific University.

14. Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Pacific University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

15. Contacts and Questions

The researcher(s) will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during the course of the study. Complete contact information for the researchers is noted on the first page of this form. If the study in question is a student project, please contact the faculty advisor. If you are not satisfied with the answers you receive, please call Pacific University's Institutional Review Board, at (503) 352 – 2112 to discuss your questions or concerns further. All concerns and questions will be kept in confidence.

16. Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the above. All my questions have been answered. I am 18 years of age or over and agree to participate in the study. I have been offered a copy of this form to keep for my records.

Participant's Signature **(SIGN & PRINT)**

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

17. Participant contact information

This contact information is required in case any issues arise with the study and participants need to be notified and/or to provide participants with the results of the study if they wish.

Would you like a summary of the results after the study is completed? ___Yes ___No

Participant's name: (Please Print) _____

Street address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

CONTACT FOR POST-QUESTIONNAIRE INTERVIEWS

If you are interested in participating in an open ended interview about your adjustment to college, please indicate below and you will be contacted after your data are analyzed. Interviews can be a brief or as long as you feel necessary and you will be given dates and times to choose from for your appointments. You are not obligated to participate if you express an interest in being contacted, we will email you and set up times. Please check your preference:

___ Yes, I am willing to be contacted to participate in a follow up interview

___ No, I prefer not to be contacted to participate in a follow up interview

Appendix D



Pacific University IRB 155-08

Informed Consent Form: Parent/Guardian

1. Study Title

Parental attachment styles and traditional undergraduates' adjustment to college.

2. Study Personnel

	Principal Investigator	Dissertation Research Advisor	Dissertation Chairperson
Name	Joel Lampert, MS	Alyson Burns-Glover, PhD	Dan McKittrick, PhD
Institution	Pacific University	Pacific University	Pacific University
Program	SPP	A & S	SPP
Email	joel@pacificu.edu	doctorboo@pacificu.edu	mckitrid@pacificu.edu
Telephone	503-577-6778	503-352-1545	503-352-7321
	Joel Lampert, MS	Alyson Burns-Glover, PhD	Dan McKittrick, PhD

3. Study Location and Dates

The study is expected to begin in October 2008, and to be completed in June 2009. The study will take place at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon.

4. Study Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to be in a research study of attachment styles and adjustment to college. You were invited to participate because you are a parent of a college student. You will be asked to evaluate your own child who is attending any college. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This study is being conducted by Joel Lampert, MS, a student in the Pacific University School of Professional Psychology. The study is being overseen by faculty members, Dr. Alyson L. Burns-Glover and Dr. Daniel S. McKittrick. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between parental involvement and adjustment to college.

5. Study Materials and Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your experience as a parent of a college student.

6. Participant Characteristics and Exclusionary Criteria

You must be a parent/guardian of a college student.

7. Anticipated Risks and Steps Taken to Avoid Them

There are risks to participating in this research. Although unlikely, possible risks include experiencing some dissatisfaction with your relationship to your college student and minimal chance of breach of confidentiality.

8. Anticipated Direct Benefits to Participants

There are no direct benefits to participating in this research.

9. Clinical Alternatives (i.e., alternative to the proposed procedure) that may be advantageous to participants

N/A

10. Participant Payment

N/A

11. Medical Care and Compensation In the Event of Accidental Injury

During your participation in this project it is important to understand that you are not a Pacific University clinic patient or client, nor will you be receiving complete medical care, psychological or mental health care as a result of your participation in this study. If you are injured during your participation in this study and it is not due to negligence by Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the research, you should not expect to receive compensation or medical care from Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the study.

12. Adverse Event Reporting Plan

Should an unexpected and/or adverse reaction or event occur, the reaction/event will be immediately reported to the Principal Investigator, Joel Lampert, MS (503-352-1545), the Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisors, Dr. Alyson Burns-Glover (503-352-1545) and Dr. Dan McKittrick (503-352-7321), and the Institutional Review Board (503-352-2112) at Pacific University.

13. Promise of Privacy

A) The records of this study will be kept private. All information provided by participants will be kept confidential and locked in a cabinet in the researcher's office. The informed

consent form will be kept separate from any data that may be collected. If the results of this study are to be presented or published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify the individual participants. Only the principal investigator and the faculty advisors will have access to the research materials.

B) If you complete this part of our study, you may be contacted at a later date to also participate in a follow-up interview. At the end of this permission slip you will be asked to check “yes, researchers may contact” or “no, do not contact.”

14. Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Pacific University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

15. Contacts and Questions

The researcher(s) will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during the course of the study. Complete contact information for the researchers is noted on the first page of this form. If the study in question is a student project, please contact the faculty advisor. If you are not satisfied with the answers you receive, please call Pacific University's Institutional Review Board, at (503) 352 – 2112 to discuss your questions or concerns further. All concerns and questions will be kept in confidence.

16. Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the above. All my questions have been answered. I am 18 years of age or over and agree to participate in the study. I have been offered a copy of this form to keep for my records.

Participant's Signature **(SIGN & PRINT)** _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

17. Participant contact information

This contact information is required in case any issues arise with the study and participants need to be notified and/or to provide participants with the results of the study if they wish.

Would you like a summary of the results after the study is completed? ____Yes ____No

Participant's name: (Please Print) _____

Street address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

YES—Researchers may contact ____

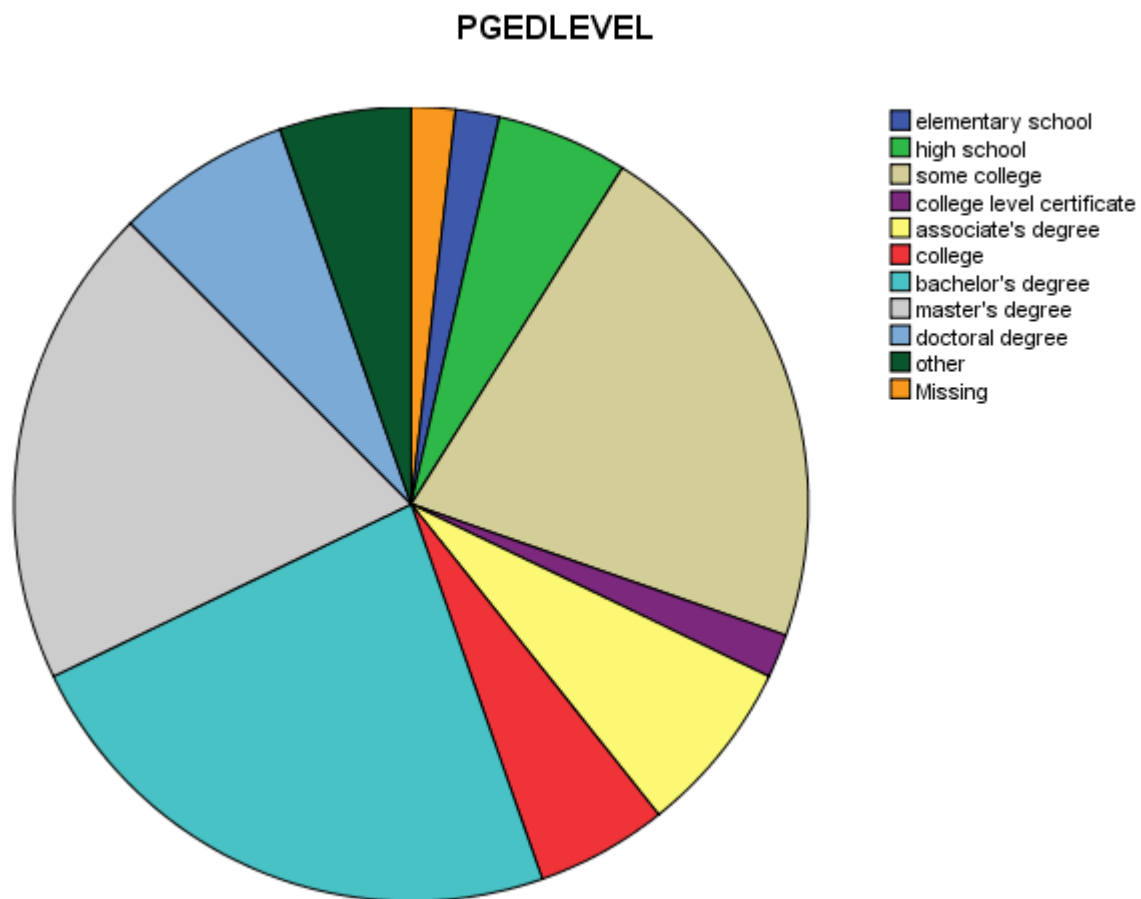
NO—Do not contact____

Appendix E

Qualitative Interview Protocol Used in Parent Focus Group

1. How did you feel when your student selected this college?
2. What was the “leaving [home] process” like?
3. What role does technology play in your relationship with your student?
4. Do you ever get “dump phone calls?” If so, what have/are they like?
5. Do you ever feel like you have done too much/too little for your student? If so, please tell me about that in terms of how it relates to the college experience.
6. What were you worried about in sending your child to college?
7. How has your relationship with your child changed [since he/she/they left for college]?
8. What would you do differently knowing what you know now [if you had this experience to repeat]?
9. Have you ever felt over-involved in your student’s life at college?
10. What do you think about so-called “helicopter parents?”

Appendix F
Parent/Guardian Education Level Reported by Student Participants (n=56)



Appendix G

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)

Please circle the most appropriate response for you. Circle only ONE answer for each item.

This set of questions asks you about your relationship with your female Parent (i.e., mother or whomever takes care of you).					
1. My mother respects my feelings.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
2. I feel my mother does a good job as a mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
3. I wish I had a different mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
4. My mother accepts me as I am.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
5. I like to get my mother's point of view on things I am concerned about.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
6. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
7. My mother can tell when I am upset about something.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
8. Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
9. My mother expects too much of me.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
10. I get upset easily around my mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
11. I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

12. When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
13. My mother trusts my judgment.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
14. My mother has her own problems, so I don't bother her with mine.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
15. My mother helps me to understand myself better.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
16. I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
17. I feel angry with my mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
18. I don't get much attention from my mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
19. My mother helps me to talk about my difficulties.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
20. My mother understands me.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
21. When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
22. I trust my mother.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
23. My mother doesn't understand what I am going through these days.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

24. I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
25. If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

The next set of questions asks you about your relationship with your male Parent (i.e., father or whomever takes care of you).					
1. My father respects my feelings.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
2. I feel my father does a good job as a father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
3. I wish I had a different father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
4. My father accepts me as I am.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
5. I like to get my father's point of view on things I am concerned about.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
6. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
7. My father can tell when I am upset about something.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
8. Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
9. My father expects too much of me.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
10. I get upset easily around my father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

11. I get upset a lot more than my father knows about.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
12. When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
13. My father trusts my judgment.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
14. My father has his own problems, so I don't bother him with mine.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
15. My father helps me to understand myself better.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
16. I tell my father about my problems and troubles.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
17. I feel angry with my father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
18. I don't get much attention from my father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
19. My father helps me to talk about my difficulties.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
20. My father understands me.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
21. When I am angry about something, my father tries to be understanding.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
22. I trust my father.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

23.	My father doesn't understand what I am going through these days.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
24.	I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
25.	If my father knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

The next set of questions asks you about your relationship with your close friends.				
1.	I like to get my friends' point of view on things I'm concerned about.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
2.	My friends can tell when I'm upset about something.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
3.	When we discuss things, my friends care about my point of view.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
4.	When I discuss things, my friends care about my point of view.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
5.	I wish I had different friends.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
6.	My friends understand me.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
7.	My friends help me to talk about my difficulties.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
8.	My friends accept me as I am.			
Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

9. I feel the need to be in touch with my friends more often.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
10. My friends don't understand what I'm going through these days.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
11. I feel alone or apart when I'm with my friends.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
12. My friends listen to what I have to say.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
13. I feel my friends are good friends.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
14. My friends are fairly easy to talk to.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
15. When I am angry about something, my friends try to be understanding.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
16. My friends help me to understand myself better.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
17. My friends care about how I am.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
18. I feel angry with my friends.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
19. I can count on my friends when I need to get something off my chest.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
20. I trust my friends.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true

21. My friends respect my feelings.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
22. I get upset a lot more than my friends know about.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
23. It seems as if my friends are irritated with me for no reason.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
24. I can tell my friends about my problems and troubles.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true
25. If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.	Almost never or Never true	Not very true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always or always true